

SEA POWER AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE GREAT WAR

THROTTLING GERMANY.

But for Naval Pressure
Germany Might Now
Secure Profit-
able Terms.

By FRANK H. SIMONDS,
Author of "The Great War."

Before the present conflict an American admiral had laid down the value of sea power in the wars of the past and estimated its prospective influence upon the next war. For Britain and for Germany Admiral Mahan's various volumes became the law and the gospel in naval history, and to the first book is ascribed the present German Emperor's change of policy, which brought his country and Great Britain to war.

Sea power in all the great conflicts of the past was not immediately decisive. Admiral Mahan has pointed out at great length and with a wealth of detail how the French were able during years, both under Louis XIV and under Napoleon, to win not only campaigns but Continental supremacy, only to lose it in the end, because they were unable to deal with sea power.

In our own War of Independence the decisive victory of Yorktown came when Britain had temporarily lost control of the water on American coasts. Yet in 1781 all the French supremacy at sea did not avail to save the French, because the British could be had on land and was had. In our own Civil War, on the other hand, the North used the blockade to its uttermost, and the possession of sea power contributed enormously to the destruction of the South.

What so far has been the new lesson of sea power in the greatest struggle of history; how far has that policy which has been known as Mahanism, as Navalism, justified itself in conflict with the rival claims of Militarism or Militarism?

Mahanism Has Prevailed.

Even at the present moment it is possible to say unqualifiedly that naval power has achieved all that was expected of it—more than many expected it could achieve. So far it has supplied the single decisive element in the whole struggle. British sea power, and it is not necessary now to discuss the relatively minor part played by the Russian, the Italian or even the French navy, won the war, so far as the war was concerned, in the first days of the conflict, and without battle.

With the declaration of war Germany became an isolated nation, so far as the sea was concerned, save only for the Baltic. First of all her merchant marine was swept from the seas or interned in neutral ports. Almost with the first note of the war to arms Hamburg and Bremen were paralyzed; they have been paralyzed ever since.

Next, within a time that was brief, however long it seemed at the moment, there were swept from the sea the few German warships which were on foreign stations when the struggle began. The Emden and the Goeben won momentary success and lasting glory, but only for the first few months. Admiral von Spee's squadron was one success, the greatest, by the way, in German naval history, was destroyed. The oceans were open to British and Allied commerce, closed to the German.

Never had a victory been so complete. In the Napoleonic and earlier centuries the merchant vessels and the warships of Britain's enemies kept the sea and some sea-borne trade persisted. Napoleon took an army to Egypt and escaped there, despite British command of the water, and Villeneuve eluded Nelson on a famous occasion. But under the conditions of steam navigation sea power has become in fact absolute in its command.

The Navy and the Armies.

The first result of the victory of sea power, of the demonstration that British sea power was supreme, was the transportation to France of the expeditionary army, which contributed materially to the defeat of the first German invasion, aided materially in blocking the first great German bid for a decision on land, and was the decisive factor, perhaps, in halting the second German advance—that directed at the Channel.

From that day to this, thanks to British sea power, hundreds of thousands of troops have been carried to France from Great Britain and from the Colonies; the British reinforcements for France, amounting to a million now, have made the deadlock in the West absolute and abolished all apparent hope of a decision in this field.

In the same fashion sea power has made it possible to transport armies to Egypt and roll back the Turks in defeat, to send

armies to Gallipoli, which, to be sure, failed, but no more signally than several expeditions directed against Napoleon. But beyond all else, sea power has enabled unprepared Britain, partially unready France, to turn to their own uses the whole industrial machinery of neutral nations, of America in particular, to equip armies, to munition and supply them as neither France nor Britain could have done.

Half the advantage of superior German preparedness was swept away when the British fleet made it possible to transform America into the factory and granary of the Allies; not impossibly, if Germany is finally beaten, it will be the verdict of history that the defeat was made in the United States, at least the Germans already attribute to American help the protraction of the war. This is the contribution of sea power.

The Submarine Fails.

Against sea power Germany had devised the submarine, or rather she had relied upon the submarine. In her plans it played the part of the old privateer. It was a commerce destroyer, and what it undertook to do was to prey upon commerce, upon the commerce on which depended the very life of Great Britain, since without imports she would starve to death.

Yet despite all the sensational successes of the submarine, it has failed in its purpose. It has not isolated Britain, it has not produced starvation, it has not even interrupted the flow of munitions or of supplies for the Allied armies. It has sunk a few great and famous ships, but in the aggregate it has not cost the British

merchant marine the same loss, comparing the percentages, that was suffered in the Napoleonic wars.

The Submarine.

And the submarine as a weapon in the North, in the narrow seas surrounding the British Isles, has been abolished as the privateer never was. It has ceased to be a factor in the North, and the sporadic outburst in the Mediterranean seems already to be on the wane. In all British harbors ships continue to come and to go; only the fact that many ships have been taken for war purposes restricts the commerce and carrying trade of Great Britain, while of German there is left nothing save the tiny fraction that, risking submarine attacks, continues in the Baltic.

As to the war fleets, across the narrow sea between the Firth of Forth and the Kiel Canal the great battle fleets watch each other, but the German is too hopelessly outnumbered to come out; it is at bay, besieged; it can come out as could Cervera's fleet at Santiago, but only to face the same fate.

Never in the whole history of war has there been a more complete decision for superior naval power. Not more complete, in fact, was the triumph of the North over the South, which was not a sea power. So far as it is now possible to see, there is no chance to challenge sea power on water; it can be challenged only upon land; that is, only on land can Germany win, and there she must win such success as will bring sea power to its knees.

This was the old Napoleonic problem, but with a difference. Napoleon was able to get a decision on land as absolute, at

the moment, as Britain's on sea. Austerlitz answered Trafalgar and Jena and Friedland completed the conquest of the Continent. But Germany has extracted no surrender from her enemies. Napoleon made Austria, Prussia, Russia give over the war and sue for peace. He made Austria surrender a second time at Wagram. He even swept a British expeditionary army out of Spain.

Beside the Napoleonic success Germany's victories to the present moment are all victories in territory, not in nations. But when Napoleon had conquered the Continent there was left Britain, safe behind her sea power and still able and willing to fight on. He had gone, in his earlier days, to Egypt to strike at Britain, and failed. He had watched the British coast from Boulogne, to which the Kaiser has not come.

Napoleon's Failure.

But in his whole career he failed to set foot on British soil or to conquer a British colony or province which would so cripple Britain as to compel or persuade her to consider peace. So he was forced to fight on, for British money and British diplomacy raised new wars in Spain, in Russia, in Austria, until at last France was worn out, while Great Britain, uninvaded, with the whole carrying trade of the world in her hands, remained unwasted and uncrushed.

Thus sea power was out land power; it made decisive victories on land of but passing value; it raised new armies, new insurrections, new wars, and it was always immune itself from injury. In the end it prevailed because France could not her accumulated capital—her past; Germany is mortgaging her future. In hu-

man capital Germany's loss has already been staggering. Britain's relatively slight, and then British capacity for recovery is vastly greater than Germany's.

Present Problems.

But the present problems are of more importance to Germany than any future contingency. Were it not for the British navy she could obtain a satisfactory peace to-day, a peace that would assure her eastern frontier and give her ally the hegemony of the Balkans. She could even expect to hold Belgium and possibly a portion of France.

As it is, she cannot obtain peace on terms that in the smallest degree recognize her great victories and conquests, because she has failed to take a single foot of British territory and has so far failed to find any weapon which would disturb British safety or menace British imports. To-day Germany could talk peace with France, with Russia, with the foe of her Austrian ally, Italy. But she cannot talk peace with Great Britain because, at a far smaller cost in lives, Britain has won practically all of Germany's colonies and now holds the gate to Germany, the sea gate by which Germany's manufactures must reach the world, by which Germany's food and raw materials must enter. How shall Germany persuade the British to permit them to use the gate? If she cannot persuade them by force, she must meet British terms.

The Terms.

These terms have been forecast: the first provision in any British treaty of peace must be the restoration by Germany of all the provinces and regions conquered. She must give up the profits of the war and bear the terrible burdens incident to her losses of men and to her accumulation of debt, not merely without reward, but with the actual loss of her colonies. Such a

war has cost her seven casualties to one British, and she has only a slightly larger white population than Britain and British colonies. In money it is costing Germany and Great Britain about dollar for dollar, but Germany has no such accumulation of capital as Britain. And some portion of British trade and commerce is still going forward.

A war of exhaustion is terribly expensive for Great Britain, but in men Great Britain is now better off because of German losses; in money she is even more advantageously placed. She is living on her accumulated capital—her past; Germany is mortgaging her future. In hu-

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How History Is Already
Repeating Itself in
the Present
Struggle.

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treaty of peace is for Germany, as she now stands, an unthinkable bargain.

But how shall she better her position? The truth is that the British naval power is becoming every day a larger and larger factor in the war and it is more and more contributing to the discomfort of Germany and to her possible defeat in the future, when she has exhausted her resources, always granting that she does not find some way to deal with Britain.

The Suez Canal.

As a last resort Germany has planned an attack upon Egypt, an attempt to cut the Suez Canal, interrupting British connection with her greatest colony and incidentally occupying one of the bastions of Britain's native subject states. The Germans have convinced themselves that once they possess themselves of Egypt, with the Turk's assistance, Britain will be ready to talk peace.

Thus the new Suez campaign represents the final bid of Germany for a victory over British sea power. But there is a vast doubt in the minds of military experts the world over as to whether the conquest of Egypt would actually achieve the result the Germans expect. It would only lengthen the voyage to India, since the Cape of Good Hope route would remain. Britain conquered India when she had only sailing vessels and had to use the Cape of Good Hope route; she held it despite Napoleon's descent upon Egypt; she draws neither men nor necessary provisions from Egypt.

In other words, there is a very general belief, which I share, that the conquest of Egypt would prove merely a success comparable to the British success in Southwest Africa, save that it would be the conquest of a more valuable colony and that it would not have a greater effect upon the progress of the war itself, which will be decided in Europe, not in Asia or Africa.

Even more interesting is the emphatic conviction of most observers outside of Germany that the invasion of Egypt is impossible. The world has seen that the Turks, with only a few weeks' warning, were able to transform Gallipoli into a fortress which resisted all Allied attacks. The Turks lacked all adequate resources in munitions and in artillery.

But the Allies have had a year's warning as to the Suez position. A year ago the Turks tried to pass the canal and were heavily defeated. Since then Great Britain has been busy fortifying the position, and it should, by all rules of war, be impregnable now.

Only America Left.

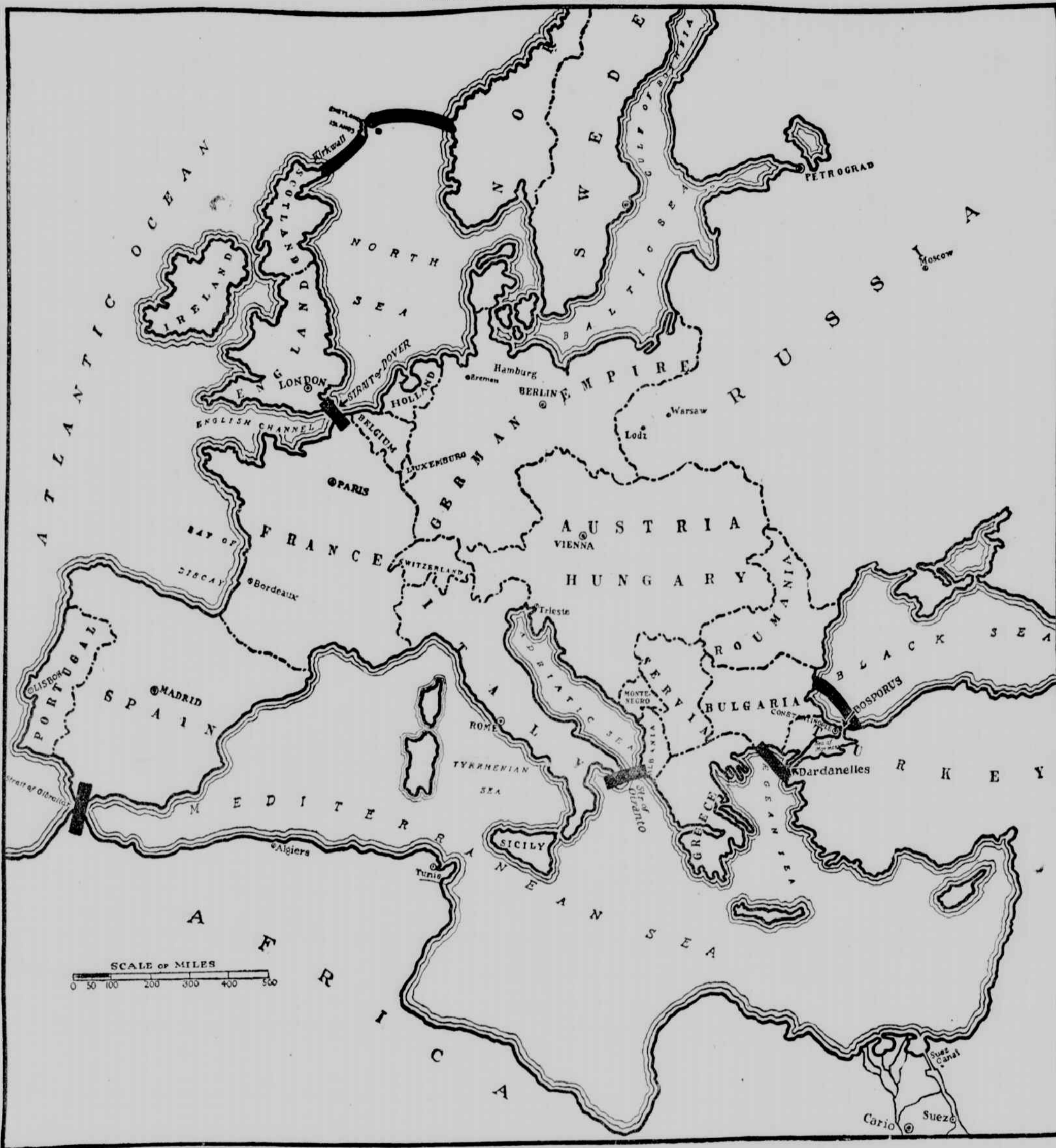
Should the Suez thrust fail, then there is left to Germany only the bare chance that some neutral nation, the United States most likely, would intervene to modify the blockade, which was not starving her, which was not yet causing her people to die of hunger or her armies to lack necessary equipment or supplies, but which was already causing general hardship and promised to become even more onerous.

I am satisfied that while the German thrust at Suez will be made, there is no mistaking the fact that the Germans are looking eagerly to the United States in the hope that this country will undertake to enforce against the British blockade the letter of international law and by doing this break down the wall which is isolating Germany and has already put an end to German exports and imports, save only in a very insignificant fraction. And it should be recognized that while the blockade has not won the war for the enemies of Germany, and while Germany is still victorious on land, the necessity to find a way to abolish the embargo upon all her trade is growing each week, and unless the way can be found Germany will have ultimately to meet British terms.

Britain's Stake.

Great Britain is fighting not for a small stake, not for a province or for a city, not for a colony or conling station; the stake of the war for her now has become the removal of her greatest rival since Napoleon's time. She is fighting now, whatever the occasion of the war, to eliminate a rival whose elimination will leave her supreme on the seas, without even a distant competitor. Moreover, she is satisfied that if she can maintain the blockade Germany will ultimately have to meet her terms.

This time has not come—it is premature to talk of British victory—but it is time to recognize how important has become the influence of sea power; how, day by day, there is more closely established the parallel between the present and the Napoleonic wars, and how certain it is that unless Germany can find a way, and all her efforts have failed so far, to break down the blockade she will lose the war despite her successes on land. This was the history of Louis XIV, of Napoleon and of the Confederacy.



Black bands show Allied blockade.